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MYANMAR

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Statement

by

His Excellency Mr. Maung Wai

Ambassador and Permanent Representative

of the

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

on

Agenda Item 2

at the

29th Session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva, 3 July 2015



Mr. President,

- The sponsors of the draft resolution should not have tabled it, in the first place, because it clearly goes against the letter and spirit of the General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, which calls for ensuring universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues, and the elimination of double standards and politicization. Similarly, the draft resolution goes against the agreed principles of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Like-Minded Group at the Geneva Chapter. These two groups always take a strong stand against country-specific resolutions at the Human Rights Council.
- It seems to us that the draft resolution has nothing to do with the promotion and protection of human rights. Rather, its real purpose is to raise the profile of a particular faith. If adopted by the Council, it will lead to distrust, misunderstanding and hatred between the followers of two different faiths. Its adoption will do nothing good. It will only be counter-productive.
- The notion that human rights of Muslims in Myanmar are violated upon is totally wrong. It is only a false perception, not the reality. If you put a spin on the false story, turning it into a human rights issue, then you are making a very serious mistake. I am saying this in reference to the OP1 of the draft resolution. OP1 is obviously based on the rumours, lies, hearsay and allegations.

Freedom of faith

Mr. President,

- Myanmar is a multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-cultural nation. The State Constitution does not allow discrimination based on one's gender, race, birth, religion, official position, social or cultural status.
- The Constitution recognizes the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of citizens in the nation. It also recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism as the religions existing in the Union on the day of its coming into operation.
- We have been promoting inter-faith harmony by conducting the inter-faith dialogue nationwide.
- Destruction of places of worship, belonging to all religions, is punishable under section 295 of the Penal Code of Myanmar. This provision is strictly observed.
- Myanmar has a population of 51-million people. For every 740 people, we have a Buddhist monastery; for every 450 people, we have a church; for every 680 people, we have a mosque; and for every 460 people, we have a Hindu temple. When you come to visit Yangon, our commercial city, you can see the Buddhist pagodas, Islamic mosques, Christian churches and Hindu temples standing side by side. In a country like this, if you make a claim that there is no freedom of faith there, then you are telling a lie, obviously.

Question of impunity

Mr. President,

- Human rights violations are not tolerated. Therefore, impunity is out of the question. In Myanmar, several complaint mechanisms do exist today. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission is one of them. Citizens or residents who think that their human rights are violated upon can make a complaint through the above mechanisms and have redress.

Citizenship

Mr. President,

- Many people outside the country have a wrong impression that Myanmar denies citizenship to a community in Rakhine State. That is not true.
- Access to citizenship would be available to those who participate in the citizenship verification process. Those who meet the criteria of the 1982 Citizenship Law will obtain the citizenship.
- A group of people are insisting on recognizing the term "Rohingya", which has never existed in our ethnic history. There is no record of such ethnic name either during the colonial era or in the censuses taken in 1973 and 1983.
- Citizenship is primarily the prerogative of a sovereign country. This matter falls within the domestic jurisdiction of Myanmar. Therefore, interference from outside the country is unacceptable.

Myanmar's stand on boat people

Mr. President,

- Recently, there have been reports by international media on irregular migrants and boat people in the Andaman Sea and the Straits of Malacca. Myanmar is deeply concerned about their suffering and life-threatening fate, as the consequences of human smuggling and illegal migration in the region.
- On 21 May 2015, our Navy rescued two fishing boats off the western coast of Rakhine State; one of the boats had 208 people onboard and the other one carried no passengers.
- On 29 May 2015, our Navy rescued another boat carrying over 700 people near Pya Pon Township.
- The rescued boat people were provided with temporary shelter, food, water, healthcare services and other humanitarian assistance. Out of the 208 rescued people from the first boat, 187 individuals will be repatriated to their country of origin. Out of the 700 rescued people from the second boat, over 500 have already been verified, and they are waiting for their repatriation.
- The current findings from the verification of the rescued boat people in Myanmar and elsewhere in the region clearly show that the majority of them are not from our country.
- The root cause of boat people is people smuggling and human trafficking.
- In the region, there are poor people who seek better livelihoods and economic opportunities and, on the other hand, there are businesses hunting for cheap and unregulated labour. It is necessary to take into account the demand factor as well. In the absence of inclusive and effective bilateral or regional mechanisms to address the issue, this vacuum is being exploited by smugglers and traffickers.
- It is necessary to address the issue without politicizing it. Myanmar has been cooperating with countries in the region, through existing bilateral and regional mechanisms, in addressing people smuggling, human trafficking and related transnational crimes. In this regard, irrationally pointing fingers at each other and putting all the blame on each other will not help address the issue. This will only derail our collective efforts to find a durable solution to the problem.

Developments in Rakhine State**Mr. President,**

- In 2012, an incident of inter-communal violence broke out in Rakhine State. The root cause was not faith-related. Since then, the government, in cooperation with community leaders, have been able to prevent the recurrence of violence there.
- Three years on, we have made significant progress in introducing development activities in Rakhine State, the second poorest state in Myanmar. The lack of development there was the root cause of the inter-communal disharmony.
- While improving livelihoods, infrastructure and basic services for both the communities, we have started resettlement for those from the relief camps. The resettlement of 2,000 households has been completed at a cost of two billion Kyats. And, the resettlement of another 3,000 households will begin once the required budget has been approved.
- Meanwhile, renovation of shelters in 15 relief camps is now underway, as the monsoon is approaching.

Mr. President,

- Against this backdrop, we have a very strong reason to believe that the OIC draft resolution is undesirable and unnecessary.
- Therefore, my delegation rejects OP2, OP3, OP6, OP8, OP9, OP10 and OP11 of the draft resolution. And, we strongly reject OP1 and OP5 as well. Not only that. My delegation disassociates itself from the draft resolution as a whole.
- We would also like to request Member States of the Human Rights Council to do the same.

I thank you, Mr. President.

